



## U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command

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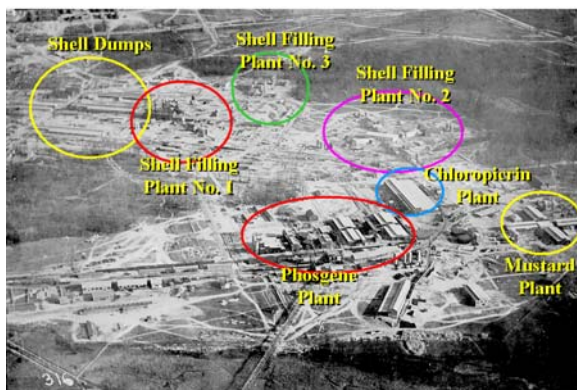
*"With Science We Defend"*

# HISTORY OF THE U.S. ARMY SOLDIER AND BIOLOGICAL CHEMICAL COMMAND

By  
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## World War I

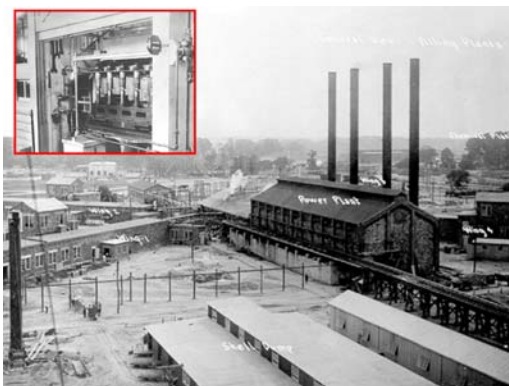
The U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM) traces its lineage back to 1917 and the entry of the United States into World War I. This was the first war that saw the broad use of chemical weapons and limited use and experimentation with biological agents and toxins. Unprepared for either type of warfare, the War Department on an emergency basis assigned chemical defense work to the Medical Department, chemical munitions to the Ordnance Department, chemical troops to the Corps of Engineers, and, on a voluntary basis, chemical agent research and development to the Bureau of Mines, part of the Department of Interior (due to their experience with toxic mine gases).



*Edgewood Area Plants in World War I*

The Ordnance Department approved the construction of the first chemical shell filling plant in the United States and on 16 October 1917, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation that designated Gunpowder Neck, Maryland, as the site for the plant. Actual construction began on or about 25 October 1917. Eventually, two additional shell filling plants were started on the Neck, but only the first one was fully operational by the end of the war. In December 1917, the Ordnance Department also authorized construction of chemical agent production plants on the Neck to support the shell filling plants. On 4 May 1918, the Ordnance Department officially changed the name of Gunpowder Reservation to Edgewood Arsenal and assigned several other chemical agent production plants across the country to the new organization.

Following the consolidation of the chemical activities in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in France during the summer of 1917, the War Department on 28 June 1918 centralized chemical warfare functions and created the Chemical Warfare Service (CWS), a temporary wartime organization. On 1 July 1918, Edgewood Arsenal was formally assigned to the new organization. The CWS successfully provided

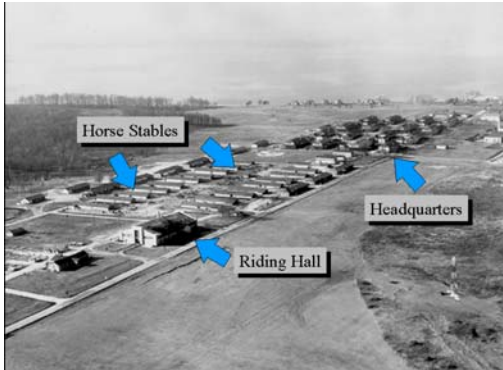


*Shell Filling Plant No. 1*

the AEF with the best protective equipment and was in the process of producing chemical weapons for use in Europe when the war ended.

## ***Between the Wars***

The Armistice of 11 November 1918 ended the wartime mission of the CWS and Edgewood Arsenal became the focus of all peacetime CWS field activities. The CWS School and proving ground (Lakehurst, NJ), the CWS Research Division (Washington, D.C.), and the gas mask factory (Long Island, NY) all moved to Edgewood Arsenal shortly after the war.



*Fort Hoyle, 1922-1940*

In June 1920, a new National Defense Act declared the CWS a permanent organization of the Regular Army. Both retaliatory and defensive work continued at Edgewood Arsenal on a peacetime basis. In 1922, the need for an artillery training installation resulted in a portion of the post being assigned to the Field Artillery and designated Fort Hoyle. This separate post existed until 1940, when the Army approved returning the land to Edgewood Arsenal.

## ***World War II***

In December 1941 when the United States entered World War II, the CWS was again called on to prepare the Army for both chemical and biological/toxin warfare. Many of the old plants had already been removed, so new filling and production plants were quickly completed. The post was renamed the Chemical Warfare Center in May 1942 to better reflect its overall mission. The Center's laboratories, organized as the CWS Technical Division, developed a wide range of new materiel, including incendiary weapons and smoke generators, as well as improved gas masks. The Chemical School expanded its program and instructed more than 30,000 troops between 1940-1945.

One post, however, could not meet all the expected needs of a large army. As a result, the CWS constructed additional chemical arsenals at Huntsville, AL, Pine Bluff, AR, and Denver, CO (designated



*WWII Headquarters*



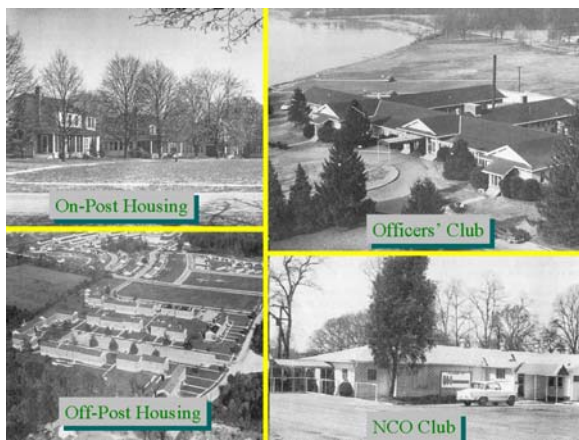
*WWII Troop Barracks*

Rocky Mountain Arsenal). Biological/toxin warfare research, largely ignored before the war, was centralized at a new facility designated Fort Detrick near Frederick, MD.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the policy that chemical warfare would not be initiated by the United States, but promised retaliation in kind against any such attack. Although reports of chemical and biological/toxin attacks surfaced throughout the war, neither the Germans nor the Japanese chose to initiate overt chemical and biological/toxin warfare against the United States for various reasons. One of the primary reasons was the work accomplished by the CWS to prepare for just such an event.

## ***The Army Chemical Center***

After World War II, the continuing importance of chemical and biological/toxin warfare readiness was recognized by the creation of the Chemical Corps on 2 August 1946. Concurrently, the Chemical Warfare Center was renamed the Army Chemical Center. The Center in the late 1940s again became the Army's peacetime center for research, development, and engineering of chemical materiel.



*1950's Housing and Clubs*

During the Korean Conflict in the 1950s, the Chemical Corps contributed to the war effort by providing incendiaries, flamethrowers, smoke, and chemical mortars among other items. Gradually, the Army Chemical Center concentrated more on research and pilot plant design and passed the production of weapons and equipment to Pine Bluff and Rocky Mountain Arsenal. Likewise, in 1951, the Chemical Corps School outgrew the Army Chemical Center and moved to Fort McClellan, AL, where it could have better facilities and larger training areas.

## ***Edgewood Arsenal***

In 1962, a major Army reorganization discontinued the Chemical Corps as a separate command. In its place, the new Army Materiel Command (AMC) and its major subordinate command, the Munitions Command (MUCOM), took control of the Army Chemical Center, again renamed Edgewood Arsenal in 1963, and the other chemical arsenals. The Chemical School was assigned to another major command that eventually became the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC).

During the 1960s, Edgewood Arsenal supported the Vietnam War primarily in the fields of riot control agents, smoke, incendiary weapons, and protective devices. Fort Detrick supported the war primarily in the field of defoliants. The protests over this war and two chemical incidents (one at Dugway Proving Ground, UT, and one on Okinawa) gradually led to increased public hostility and declining Congressional support for the chemical weapons program.

In 1969, President Richard M. Nixon reaffirmed the no first use policy for chemical weapons and renounced the use of biological/toxin weapons. Other legislation the same year effectively ended open air testing and significantly restricted the procurement of chemical weapons. These actions led to the Army stopping the production of chemical weapons and beginning the process to dispose of the remaining World War II stockpiles.

During the early 1970s, the Army's declining interest in preparing for chemical warfare led to a recommendation to merge the Chemical Corps with the Ordnance Corps. As part of this plan, the Chemical School at Fort McClellan, AL, was disestablished and a portion of the training moved to the Ordnance Center and School at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), MD. To reduce operating costs, on 1 July 1971, Edgewood Arsenal was discontinued as a separate installation and the property and installation support functions merged with APG. Edgewood Arsenal, the command, continued as the primary organization in the newly designated Edgewood Area. One year later, Pine Bluff Arsenal and Rocky Mountain Arsenal were transferred from the command jurisdiction of Edgewood Arsenal and assigned to MUCOM Headquarters.

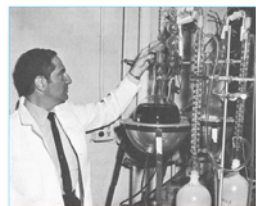


*1960's Troop Barracks, Dispensary and Gym*

In 1972, the United States signed the Biological Weapons Convention. This resulted in the end of the biological/toxin retaliatory weapon research and production program at Fort Detrick and Pine Bluff Arsenal. The facility at Fort Detrick was transferred to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for cancer research. The remaining defensive aspects of the biological/toxin warfare program were transferred to Edgewood Arsenal.

## ***Chemical Systems Laboratory***

By the late 1970s, there was a growing concern that the Soviet Union was highly prepared for chemical warfare and was possibly using chemical and toxin weapons in various conflicts around the world. This led to the Secretary of the Army authorizing the continuance of the Chemical Corps and reestablishing the Chemical School at Fort McClellan, AL.



*Edgewood Area Environmental Projects*

In January 1977, the Army combined all armament research and development programs under the U.S. Army Armament Research and Development Command (ARRADCOM), headquartered at Dover, NJ. Two months later, Edgewood Arsenal (the command) was disestablished and most of its personnel assigned to the new Chemical Systems Laboratory (CSL), a subordinate organization of ARRADCOM, located in the Edgewood Area. The remaining personnel were assigned to the new U.S. Army Armament

Materiel Readiness Command (ARRCOM), headquartered at Rock Island, IL, although their duty station remained the Edgewood Area.

## ***Chemical Research, Development and Engineering Center***

To reduce overhead expenses by eliminating a headquarters, the Army decided to create a single focal point for armament, munitions and chemical matters. On 1 July 1983, ARRADCOM and ARRCOM merged to form the U.S. Army Armament, Munitions and Chemical Command (AMCCOM), a unique one-command commodity center and life cycle manager for Army systems related to armament, munitions, and chemical defense. The Chemical Systems Laboratory became the new Chemical Research and Development Center (CRDC). On 26 March 1986, the name of the Center was again changed to the Chemical Research, Development and Engineering Center (CRDEC) to better reflect its actual mission.

The Center contributed to the revitalization of the Army's chemical warfare capabilities by developing better defensive equipment and assisting in the production of new binary chemical weapons at Pine Bluff Arsenal in 1987. In addition, the Center supported the destruction of the existing stockpile as mandated by Congress in 1986.

The success of the Center's work was reflected by the agreement of the Soviets to finally discuss a chemical treaty and the actual signing of a bilateral chemical weapons destruction agreement in 1990. In support of this agreement, the Secretary of Defense canceled the new chemical retaliatory program and mothballed the binary production facilities at Pine Bluff Arsenal.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and the massive United Nation coalition response to liberate Kuwait, designated Operation Desert Shield/Storm, resulted in enormous technical support for all chemical/biological defensive materiel deployed for the war. As in past wars, CRDEC provided the

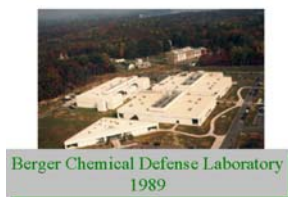


*Binary Chemical Weapons*

military with the best protective equipment against both chemical and biological/toxin attack and the best detection and decontamination devices available anywhere in the world.

## ***Chemical and Biological Defense Command***

The growing complexity of programs and rapid changes in the nation and the world caused an intense examination of CRDEC's organization structure. The leadership recognized that with diminished



Berger Chemical Defense Laboratory  
1989



Process Engineering Facility  
1991



McNamara Life Sciences Building  
1997

*New Edgewood Area Buildings*

funding, a smaller national defense force, and a continued emphasis on technology, the traditional line and staff organization would not work. CRDEC could not continue the old way of doing business. At the same time, an effort to consolidate all chemical and biological matters within AMC was recommended. This had to be accomplished despite the current and future resource constraints.

On 1 October 1992, CRDEC was provisionally reorganized into the U.S. Army Chemical and Biological Defense Agency (CBDA). CBDA reported directly to AMC. The Commanding General of CBDA also became the AMC Deputy Chief of Staff for Chemical and Biological Matters. The Agency's major subelement, designated the Edgewood Research, Development and Engineering

Center (ERDEC) took its name from the old Edgewood Arsenal. Other new elements of the Agency included the Technical Escort Unit and the Program Manager for Rocky Mountain Arsenal. The new Agency organized its workforce into teams and started a new customer/business oriented way of doing business.

CBDA was officially designated the U.S. Army Chemical and Biological Defense Command (CBDCOM), a major subordinate command of AMC, on 1 October 1993. During 1995, CBDCOM grew with the activation of chemical activities at the eight chemical stockpile sites around the country.

## ***Soldier and Biological Chemical Command***

In 1997, under the auspices of Vision 21, an initiative to generate resources to support force modernization, AMC asked two of its major subordinate commands, CBDCOM and the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Command (SSCOM), located at Natick, MA, to examine the possibility of merging. The response was positive for consolidation and AMC approved the concept plan in January 1998. On 1 October 1998, the merger of CBDCOM and SSCOM, along with the U.S. Army Surety Field Activity and the chemical materiel management mission and associated resources from the U.S. Army Armaments and Chemical Acquisition and Logistics Activity (ACALA), officially created SBCCOM. The headquarters of SBCCOM remained at APG. Natick and Edgewood Research, Development and Engineering Centers consolidated in place to form a single organizational element. No personnel changed their duty stations with the activation of the new command. In 1999, SBCCOM also assumed operational control of Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, and Jefferson Proving Ground, IN. In 2000, SBCCOM added operational control of Pine Bluff Arsenal, AR.



*SBCCOM Ceremony-1998*

The mission of SBCCOM remained the same as its predecessors. The Command is to develop, acquire, and sustain soldier, soldier support and nuclear, biological and chemical defense technology, systems, and services to ensure the decisive edge and maximum protection for U.S. Forces. It is also to

provide for the safe storage and destruction of chemical materiel and the successful support of chemical treaties and demilitarization.



*Recent SBCCOM Projects*

U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command  
Historical Research and Response Team  
ATTN: AMSSB-CIH E5027  
Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21010-5424